Gaslighting

Gaslighting is an insidious form of manipulation and psychological control. Victims of gaslighting are deliberately and systematically fed false information that leads them to question what they know to be true, often about themselves. They may end up doubting their memory, their perception, and even their sanity. Over time, a gaslighter's manipulations can grow more complex and potent, making it increasingly difficult for the victim to see the truth.

How Gaslighting Works

The term gaslighting comes from a 1938 play, *Gas Light*, and its film adaptation. Gaslighting can occur in personal or professional relationships, and victims are targeted at the core of their being: their sense of identity and self-worth. Manipulative people who engage in gaslighting do so to attain power over their victims, either because they simply derive warped enjoyment from the act or because they wish to emotionally, physically or financially control their victim.

How does gaslighting begin?

A relationship with a gaslighter may seem to start out quite well. They may praise their target on a first date and immediately confide in them. Such disclosure, before any intimacy has been established, establishes trust quickly; it's part of a tactic known as love bombing. The more quickly a victim becomes enamored, the more quickly the next phase of manipulation can begin.

What are a gaslighter's tactics?

A gaslighter will initially lie about simple things, but the volume of misinformation soon grows, and the gaslighter may accuse the victim of lying if he or she questions the narrative. They typically deploy occasional positive reinforcement to confuse the victim and keep them off balance, but at the same time, they may attempt to turn others against the victim, even their own friends and family, by telling them that the victim has been lying or is delusional.

How do you know that you're being gaslighted?

Self-doubt may rise as the gaslighter insists that what the victim remembers, thinks, and feels is wrong. The manipulative individual may then introduce lies in more sensitive arenas, aiming to disrupt and distort foundational aspects of the victim’s being, wearing them down, establishing confusion, and forcing them to rely on the gaslighter’s version of reality.

Is gaslighting ever unintentional?

It is possible for an individual to manipulate someone without realizing they are doing so. Importantly, though, the person still enjoys wielding control over the mind and behavior of the victim, even if they cannot articulate or acknowledge it. Some people engage in manipulative behavior because they witnessed it frequently as a child, most often in their parents. Regardless of a gaslighter's level of self-awareness, though, the behavior is never acceptable, and ignorance of its manipulative effects should not be accepted as an excuse.

What is medical gaslighting?

Medical gaslighting refers to a scenario in which a medical provider ignores or downplays an individual's legitimate medical concerns. This is a colloquial use of the term "gaslighting" and often refers to situations in which a medical provider may not actually intend to mislead or manipulate a patient; rather, they failed to take the patient's concerns seriously or to pursue them in an attempt to reach a diagnosis.

How to Recognize a Gaslighter

Gaslighting can be more effective and successful than many people imagine, and almost anyone can be susceptible to gaslighting tactics, which have been deployed throughout history, and continue to be used today, by domestic abusers, dictators, narcissists, and cult leaders. The most effective gaslighters are often the hardest to detect; they may be better recognized by their victims' actions and mental state.

Who becomes a gaslighter?

Those who employ this tactic often have a personality disorder—narcissistic personality disorder and psychopathy chief among them. Manipulators have a tendency to present one face to their target and another to the rest of the world, leading victims to assume that if they ask for help or speak out, no one will believe that they have been emotionally abused. Gaslighters typically repeat their tactics across several relationships.

What’s the difference between gaslighting and manipulation?

Manipulation is a key part of gaslighting, but manipulation is a fairly common tactic that almost anyone is capable of employing, while gaslighting, and gaslighters, are more rare. Children, for example, try to manipulate parents at an early age, and marketers aim to manipulate consumers, but gaslighting involves a pattern of abusive behaviors with the intent not just to influence someone, but actually to control them.

What’s the difference between gaslighting and narcissism?

A narcissist may be self-promoting and feel superior to others; a gaslighter aims to make another person question their own self-value. Gaslighting can sometimes be a tactic employed by someone with a narcissistic personality, but it is not a core trait of narcissistic personality disorder.

Leaving a Gaslighter

A primary goal of a gaslighter is to keep their victim hooked. If a victim disagrees with or questions the abuser, he or she may try to make it seem as if they themselves are being victimized by the target. Alternately, they may try to lure a reluctant partner back to them through positive reinforcement. Many people eventually find a way to escape a gaslighter's influence, leaving the manipulator to search for a new victim; often, research suggests, they already have a target in mind.

What is "hoovering"?

When someone tries to leave them, a gaslighter may turn to the tactic of "hoovering," which takes its name from the vacuum-cleaner brand. A hoovering gaslighter will tell the victim how much they love him or her, and praise all of their positive qualities. They may also explain how things are going to change between them. But soon after the victim agrees to stay, things tend to go back to the way they were.

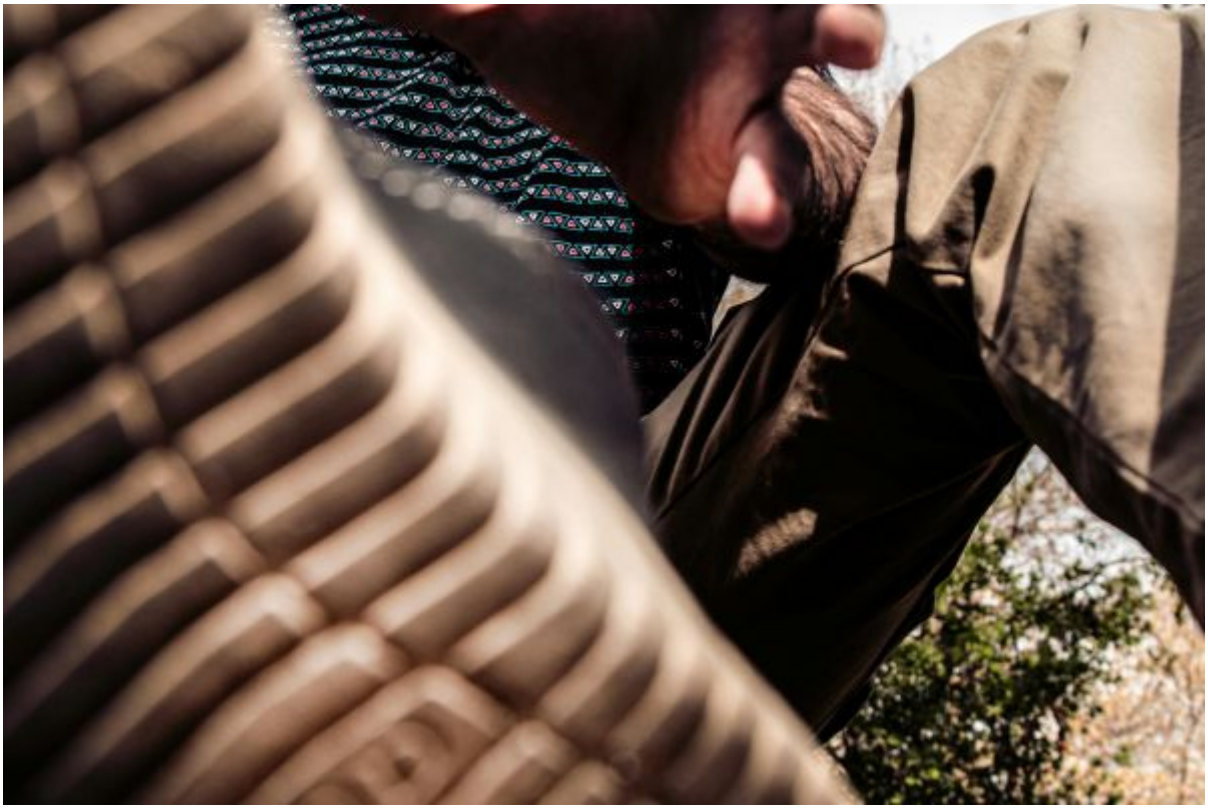
How does gaslighting change a victim?

Gaslighting can be psychologically devastating. It violates trust and upends an individual's view that people are generally good, potentially making them

suspicious of everyone close to them. Falling victim to a gaslighter also erodes a person’s trust in themselves and makes them forget what they once valued about themselves; after all, it’s easy to blame themselves for having been too trusting, vulnerable, or dependent. The experience makes some victims never want to be part of a relationship again.

Everyone’s memory can be faulty to a certain extent. New research on memory's foibles shows how gaslighters prey upon their victims by taking advantage of this simple fact.

Recognize the signs of “self-gaslighting”—when you internalize the dismissive voices you’ve heard from others—and learn to take your own needs and emotions seriously.



BRODA, or Bait, Refuse Open Dialogue, and Attack, is a mix of rage-baiting, gaslighting and sadism that can pull us into toxic interactions. Here's how to counter it.

From ontological insecurity, a quest for dominance.

Original Link: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/gaslighting